

SECRET

255

8 October 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Assessment of President Frei's Intentions

1. Last night Minister of Defense Ossa may have given Ambassador Korry a preview of President Frei's plan of action. During the meeting, Ossa remarked that a combination of circumstances might yet persuade Frei to act. It can be assumed (perhaps wrongly) that Ossa's remarks reflect Frei's own sentiments. Thus when Ossa outlined three actions that the President might take, he may have been relaying Frei's tentative plan of action:

- a. to make a nationwide speech;
- b. to talk privately to General Schneider to work out an agreed plan for joint action to block Allende; and
- c. to go forward with a plan to have the civil ministers resign, establish a military cabinet, and shift General Schneider to civilian position.

2. If this is the case, it is important to identify it as such so that we do not overlook or fail to support an opportunity to make Frei move from step 1 to step 3. It would seem logical that these actions would be taken in phases. Thus, if Frei makes a speech, he will probably await and evaluate the reaction before deciding to move on to the next step. Accordingly, when and if Frei does make a nationwide address, (which will probably have its basis on the probable sell-out of the PDC negotiating committee and its failure to extract meaningful Constitutional guarantees), we should be prepared to give it maximum exploitation and worldwide replay, including El Mercurio and [REDACTED]. This propaganda activity should help assure Frei that his move has popular support,

Approved for Release

July 2000

SECRET

186

SECRET

and encourage him to follow through with a military solution.

3. There are at least three explanations why Frei/Ossa felt that it was necessary or useful at this time to advise the USG of Frei's views:

a. Frei wanted to keep the USG abreast of his own thinking;

b. Frei wished to forestall any USG-sponsored coup attempt so that the USG would not interfere with his own plans;

c. Frei wanted to keep us off-balance (by suggesting that he might take action) long enough to permit a constitutional transition to Allende.

The Ambassador concluded that the meeting was called to alert him to the outside possibility that Frei might yet act and that the critical decision is whether he will make a nationwide speech. Our "best estimate" is that Frei has gotten wind of our intentions, and is trying to stall us until he is satisfied he has exhausted all his options, at which time he may decide to: (1) sit on the fence; (2) go to step three; or (3) let the Americans do the job for him.

4. In view of the Ambassador's most recent meeting with Ossa, the assumption that Frei does not intend to act or does not have a plan may be unfounded. It is possible, contrary to current assumptions, that Frei indeed has a plan and will act. If this is true, it may explain why Ossa requested a meeting with the Ambassador.

SECRET